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ABSTRACT

Conclusions drawn from brief visits to library schools in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Slovak Republic in 1992 and 1993 are presented. Visits were made to 10 schools, appropriate ministries, and major libraries and information centers. The visits were largely supported by the Trans European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS), a European Community development assistance program. The purpose of the visits was to explore the potential of the Section on Education and Training of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions to contribute to the development of colleagues teaching librarianship and information studies in Eastern Europe. The Section on Education and Training wished to investigate the need for regional training seminars in Eastern Europe. In all the countries visited, attempts to revise curricula were apparent, with efforts to incorporate information technology and an increased interest in management. A second general trend was the impact of the economic situation on the education system. Specific needs identified through the visits are summarized with the goal of assisting libraries to develop to function in a market economy within pluralistic democratic societies. Six appendixes give specifics for each of the countries and a list of discussion topics. (SLD)

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TEMPUS

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EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION WORK IN EASTERN EUROPE

Report on visits sponsored by the European Commission TEMPUS programme, 1992 and 1993

(Contracts ref. IMG-91-UK-0148 and IMG-92-UK-1014)

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EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION WORK IN EASTERN EUROPE

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EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP AND INFORMATION WORK IN EASTERN EUROPE

Introduction

This is a summary report on the conclusions drawn from brief visits to Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and the Slovak Republic in 1992 and 1993. Visits were made to 10 Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies and to appropriate Ministries and major libraries and information centres in the countries concerned. Separate reports on the visits to each country are appended.

The aim of the visits was to explore the potential for the I.F.L.A. Section on Education and Training to contribute to the development of colleagues teaching Librarianship and Information Studies in Eastern Europe. The origin of the visits lay in the Section's Medium Term Programme for 1992-1997. Arising out of the recommendations of the International Colloquium on the Harmonisation of Education and Training Programmes for Library, Information and Archival Personnel held in London in 1987, the Section is committed to work towards establishing a series of regional seminars on the training and retraining of teachers of librarianship and information studies. At the time of the Colloquium, it was envisaged that those seminars would be in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. However, the political and economic changes in Eastern Europe in 1989 made it necessary to consider whether there were comparable needs in that region. It was anticipated that the visits might lead, for example, to a proposal to fund a regional seminar or series of seminars, or some other appropriate mechanism to develop professional education and training. This would be established through I.F.L.A., or through EUCLID, the recently established European Association for Library and Information Education and Research.

The visits were largely supported by TEMPUS, the agency which is seen as having a potential role in funding future development in this area, with additional support from the British Council and from The Robert Gordon University. TEMPUS (Trans European Mobility Programme for University Studies) is a European Community development assistance programme. As with all CEC programmes, whether directed at countries within the Community or outside it, the aims of the TEMPUS programme are to achieve political stability through trans-national partnerships and mutually dependent economic and social development.

Political control of the countries of Eastern Europe has been regularly and seriously disrupted throughout this Century - by the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, the expansion and collapse of Hitler's Germany between 1938 to 1945, and the imposition and dissolution of Communistic regimes from the late 1940s up to 1989. National boundaries have changed on several occasions. Changes in political control have not been without impact on the education system.

The two major continental wars earlier in this Century caused severe economic disruption throughout Europe. The economic ideology imposed on Eastern Europe since the last war has been equally, if not more damaging. For the last forty years, the currencies of the Eastern European countries were not freely convertible, and internal economies were tightly controlled. Imports were strictly controlled, and (when available) imported goods were sold at hard currency prices which bore little relation to state controlled incomes, to the state subsidised cost of internally produced goods, or even to the price at which the goods were available in Western Europe at official or unofficial rates of currency exchange. Eastern European industries were thus under little pressure to compete with countries outwith the Eastern trade group (COMECON/CMEA). Their products became uncompetitive, and their countries' ability to earn hard currencies through exporting gradually diminished.

The worsening shortage of the hard currency necessary to purchase essential foreign products and raw materials, and export restrictions on advanced technologies imposed by Western governments, resulted in a widening technological gulf not only between industries in Eastern and Western Europe, but also between their education systems. The shortage of hard currency, and political determination to limit awareness of the nature of society in the West, reduced the already limited support not only for equipment, but also for foreign travel and for publications, and contributed to the growing isolation of professional practice and professional education in Eastern Europe from contemporary developments in Western Europe.

The Commission of the European Community (CEC), along with other international agencies and individual countries, is providing considerable assistance through its PHARE programme of assistance for economic restructuring in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The economic problems of Eastern Europe cannot, however, be solved without creating a workforce equipped with up to date knowledge and skills. To achieve this objective, the CEC has established (within PHARE) the TEMPUS programme with the aims of improving the capabilities at higher education institutions through development of teaching staff and support for structural improvements. The emphasis is on quality, and on relevance to social, economic and cultural development.

The CEC initially approved funding for TEMPUS for the period 1990 to 1993, but it is expected that details of support for the programme from 1994 will be

announced shortly. It is believed that separate, additional provision for education for librarianship and information studies may also be allocated within the PHARE programme. The annual budget for the first phase of TEMPUS was set at more than 55,500,000 ECU (European Currency Units, about #38,000,000 sterling or U.S. $72,000,000). Bi-lateral aid is also provided by individual Community countries, in some cases in direct support of TEMPUS activities. Most of these funds are allocated to national government agencies in the Eastern European countries concerned, who are responsible for determining local priorities and allocating the available budget to projects proposed involving Western European institutions in partnerships solely with institutions in their own country or in regional partnerships involving institutions in Western Europe and other Eastern European countries.

Assistance which can be provided through TEMPUS schemes can include:

- Purchase of teaching materials (e.g. books, journals), and equipment (e.g. computers, software)
- Study visits, attendance at courses, and industrial placements in Western Europe for teaching staff and students from Eastern Europe
- Advisory and teaching visits by staff from Western Europe to Eastern Europe
- Replacements for staff engaged in TEMPUS activities
- Linguistic preparation for staff and students
- Translation of teaching materials

The initial requirement for any project is that assistance should be provided through multi-lateral partnerships. This is common in most CEC educational schemes. As a minimum, a TEMPUS project needs the involvement of at least one partner from 2 European Community (EC) countries and 1 East European country.

The countries eligible for assistance from TEMPUS are currently (approximate populations in brackets): Albania (3M), Bulgaria (9M), Czech and Slovak Republic (16M), Estonia (1.5M), Hungary (11M), Latvia (2.5M), Lithuania (3.7M), Poland (38M), and Romania (23M). The German Democratic Republic (17M) and Yugoslavia (23M) were formerly included in the TEMPUS scheme. The former G.D.R. is now within the orbit of the schemes for supporting trans-national education and research within the EC and European Free Trade Area (EFTA) countries. Slovenia has continued within the orbit of TEMPUS as a result of its independence from Yugoslavia.

These visits were focussed on the larger of the eligible countries, in geographically proximate groups. This was mainly because they offered a more economical use of time, particularly in travelling to and from the countries on a very limited budget. Some of the smaller countries became eligible for assistance under the TEMPUS programme after the initial programme had been planned or after the deadline for applications for TEMPUS funding for 1991/92 and 1992/93.

In preparation for the visits, a list of topics was prepared and sent to the host institutions to enable them to give advance consideration to the issues to be discussed. The topics are outlined in Appendix 6.

In all the countries visited there were two noticeable trends in the education system. First and foremost were attempts being made to revise curricula. As well as trying to incorporate information technology into appropriate parts of their courses, the Schools were also trying to respond to perceived needs in the country by developing their teaching in the fields of management, and in business information. There was, however, some awareness, particularly in the Czech Republic and in Poland, that across the whole spectrum of library and information services, professional thinking and professional practice had not kept pace with developments in the West, eg in community information, in school librarianship and in services to disadvantaged groups. The second general trend evident in all the countries was the impact of national financial problems on the education system. This affected funding for equipment, the level of teachers' salaries, and, collectively, the ability to implement change.

Many of the library services which had been supported by organisations under the previous regimes were being closed or much reduced in the scale of activity. The main impact was being felt by the public libraries, whose former largely cultural role was not seen as commanding sufficient priority at a time of severe financial crisis, and which are at present ill-equipped to develop the broader range of services to the community which are to be found in public libraries in Western Europe. However, where the students of Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies were graduating with even basic information technology skills, such as word-processing, they were easily able to find alternative work to replace the opportunities lost as a result of these closures. Indeed, the new job opportunities were financially more attractive, and this may result in some future recruitment problems for libraries and information centres.

Other kinds of professional and paraprofessional courses in librarianship and information studies were emerging in each country, but relationships between them and existing Schools were generally good. A more serious problem, particularly in Czechoslovakia, was the adoption of an externally designed mode of study, leading to a previously unknown level of qualification. It is not clear that the implications of this change for the structure of the workforce had been fully understood when it received the support of representatives of the profession. The educational implications of accommodating this change are substantial, and only one of the six institutions affected by it is to receive direct external assistance.

Generally, governments appear to have welcomed and cooperated with the surveys of the books and libraries sector of their economies (the 'Books Sector Reports') which have been carried out by consultants supported by the World Bank and the British government. These surveys, however, simply report the present situation and the issues facing the governments concerned. They do not necessarily lead to a solution, since that is dependent on government policy, and particularly the willingness and ability to finance the level of investment required to upgrade services.

The Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies are generally relatively small compared to other departments in the same institution. Unlike many comparable Schools in Western Europe, few offer anything other than courses in

librarianship and information studies. It was not clear from the information gathered during the visits whether the information economy had diversified sufficiently in the countries concerned to permit the evolution of a range of courses targeted at specific job markets, although all the Schools appeared to have staff capable of developing new courses, given guidance and sufficient resources. The former system of manpower planning appears to have collapsed, but in any case it is doubtful whether it could have coped with the rapid diversification of specialisms in contemporary information work.

Research into librarianship and information studies was a major problem area. Such real research as was taking place appeared to be rather unworldly, and unlikely to contribute to the solution of current problems. Other research was in reality a disguise for funding development projects.

Underlying all the problems of the Schools was a lack of adequate physical resources. The Schools were, for the most part, operating in old buildings not easily adapted to the needs of a subject which now has a strong technological basis. Library facilities were poor. There was little funding available for subscriptions to foreign journals. The cost of British Library photocopy coupons or postage to return books was very high relative to academic staff salaries, and this made it almost prohibitive to obtain material on interlibrary loan. Many of the journals which had previously been published by libraries and other state funded organisations within the countries had ceased to be published, because it was no longer possible to subsidise them. Teachers were thus isolated not only from international developments but also from developments in their own countries.

Teaching equipment was limited, and access to information technology was significantly poorer than in comparable Western European Schools. Although PCs and e.mail systems are beginning to become available, students in some Schools still have to be taken to see the few CD-ROM systems which have been acquired by libraries, or to observe searches on international on-line services. The national aspirations to develop skills in Information Technology, and to support developments related to economic reconstruction provide opportunities for Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies to acquire the resources they need to support their teaching about the whole range of library services. Given their relative isolation, and a consequent tendency to misinterpret events in the West on the basis of limited access to journal articles, a note of caution must be sounded at this stage about the danger that in developing courses to meet the needs of the emerging information job market, they might lose sight of their established vocational responsibilities, as has happened in some Schools in Western Europe and North America which have ceased to prepare students to work in libraries.

A particular weakness in most of the Schools was developing the knowledge and skills of their existing staff to support new developments. Some also faced problems in recruiting, motivating, and retaining teachers of the necessary calibre, because they can neither reward their staff sufficiently nor provide them with adequate teaching resources. Teachers are paid less than unskilled workers in factories, and are compelled to take additional or alternative employment to survive. Fortunately, several of the Schools have able members of staff who are supported by spouses employed in the private sector. Others have a number of enthusiastic teachers or people of ability who can find no alternative employment. Limited resources are not the only barrier to developing the talents of the academic staff, many of whom require work experience in the West as much as they would welcome the opportunities for more contacts with teachers from the West. When training events are held in their own countries, they often are not notified that they are taking place,

because the formal channels of internal communication are collapsing.

Some Schools were already receiving assistance from Western Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies, or were the subject of a current application for TEMPUS funds for a link. Contacts with Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Western Europe varied from School to School, but the overall impression was that few Schools from Western Europe were actively involved in seeking partnerships in Eastern Europe, and they were focussing their attention on the same few Schools in the East, perhaps because they recognised those with the strongest potential for development, or perhaps because they were in the most accessible cities. There appears to be little evidence that Schools in Eastern Europe are taking advantage of new opportunities to establish contacts in the West. In part this may be because of lack of experience in international activities, but they may also not command sufficient priority within their own government agencies to acquire the necessary financial support to make external contacts.

Most Schools also had a limited number of people with foreign language skills (mainly English, German or French, as well as Russian), and there was clearly some need for development of these skills to facilitate the building of partnerships.

From these visits it was expected that common needs would be identified in the Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Eastern Europe. These seemed likely to focus on the support required to enable them to adapt their curricula to the needs of a market economy functioning within a pluralistic democratic society. The specific needs identified as a result of the visits may be summarised as follows:

- closer contact for both staff and students with all aspects of professional practice and professional education in Western Europe

- developing contacts and professional partnerships in Western Europe

- identifying mechanisms for and the benefits of collaborative development

- guidance in planning and developing modern curricula, and in conducting related manpower studies

- guidance in teaching (and in making relevant in the local context):

    - the principles and practice of management of libraries and information centres
    - the role of information in management and decision making
    - business information sources and services
    - public information services

- improving the availability of learning resources

- an enhanced supply of up to date teaching materials in their own languages (including news about developments in libraries and information centres in their own countries)

- an enhanced supply and continuing supply of foreign professional journals and monographs for staff research and for developing linguistic competences

- enhancement of language skills (mainly in English and German)

- improved access to telecommunications networks, supported by access to appropriate information sources in print and electronic forms including on-line services

- upgrading of information technology, often requiring a substantial increase in the provision of hardware and appropriate software to equip students with the related skills, and appreciation of the potential of IT so that they can play a pro-active role in transforming information work in their country

- raising awareness of the standards of service expected in library services in market oriented circumstances

- guidance in the development of model library services.

- raising policy makers' awareness of potential problems such as those outlined above, and of the significance of libraries and information work for the economic, educational and social reconstruction which is taking place.

Overall problems and needs

I returned from these visits concerned about a situation which appears to be rapidly deteriorating. The recent changes have exposed the countries of Eastern Europe as comparable to many developing countries in the Third World in terms of the financial resources currently available for investment and development. They have, however, a more widely established education system, and a broader (albeit weak) industrial base. The former concern about the constraints imposed by the Communist system on intellectual freedom has been replaced by a growing awareness of the poor infrastructure, particularly information technology and telecommunications, and of the lack of recognition and financial support for the potential role of libraries and information services in underpinning economic and social development.

Whilst the Western countries are encouraging the countries of Eastern Europe to develop their business enterprises, it appears that they are expected to do so whilst still suffering from a serious handicap. Although they are being helped to develop computerised control and management information systems which examine operations internally within an enterprise and which will improve the efficiency of their industrial and commercial organisations, the uncontrolled use of the terms 'business information technology' and 'business information systems' to describe these systems conceals the absence of any information systems designed to assemble and disseminate the information required by managers for strategic decision making.

Ninety per cent of top management's information needs are met from external sources. Any Western businessman would have a keen appreciation of the value of external information in strategic decision making. It was, I believe, an American banker who described money as "information on the move". I am sure a European banker would share the perceptions underlying that remark. The business information services which are widespread in Britain are, however, outwith the experience of managers (and bankers) in Eastern Europe.

It is unlikely that the commercial and industrial enterprises of Eastern Europe will be able to engage effectively in trading with Western countries (and earn the hard currency required for continued investment in economic development) unless they have access to external sources of information about current and potential markets, about their likely competitors, about the reliability of their suppliers, and about the credit-worthiness of their customers. The business information services which provide such information are outwith the experience of both industrial and commercial managers and the professionals in libraries and information centres. Resources are needed to develop these services ab initio, and to develop the training programmes necessary to train people to provide and to use them. At present, such activities appear to be under-represented in the European assistance programmes.

The role of all kinds of libraries and information services in underpinning the necessary economic redevelopment of Eastern Europe is a crucial one. The ability of the higher education system to make a useful contribution to economic and social development appears limited. The future prosperity of these countries will largely depend on the young people who pass through the higher education system in coming years. The wasteful devotion of time to the study of Marxism has been dropped from curricula, but that was not the only problem in higher education which needs to be resolved. The abysmally low level of funding for university libraries (5% to 10% of the expenditure on the acquisition of books and journals of comparable institutions in Western Europe) makes 'reading for a degree' an impossibility. All too often,

academic librarians have little concept of the potential of the library as a learning resources centre, and are merely apathetic custodians of irrelevant collections. Staff and students remain isolated from the knowledge and ideas of the West, and there is no basis for developing a modern curriculum. In these circumstances, teaching methods can only be didactic, and do little to develop the range of critical, analytical and evaluative skills which are the goal of Western higher education. The scope for fostering students' initiative and enterprise is minimal.

Convincing people to develop something of which they have no previous experience is a major problem. Just as there is a need to establish business information services, there is an equally urgent need to establish some model academic libraries to demonstrate in practical terms the benefits for teaching and learning of adequate library collections and of pro-active reader services. Those models would include training programmes for students of librarianship, for academic library staff, and for university teachers to impart the approaches to enterprise and to quality in library service, in teaching and learning methods, and in the use of learning resources which are the hallmarks of Western higher education.

The World Bank and the British Government's 'Know how fund for Eastern Europe' have helped to support studies of the problems of the books and libraries sector in the economies of most of the Eastern European countries. The reports are intended to provide an overview of the sector, and are intended as the basis on which governments could approach international agencies for assistance, or the World Bank for loans. The reports would be a useful starting point for anyone engaging in development activities in these countries, but their existence is not widely known. More attention needs to be drawn to their availability whilst the information which they contain is still relevant.

Setting aside economic difficulties, lack of experience in approaching appropriate agencies, and in formulating project proposals in an acceptable manner may be significant problems to be overcome. The willingness of Western European institutions to develop partnerships in Eastern Europe will be a critical factor in developing proposals.

Recommendations

1. There needs to be urgent action at a political level to raise the awareness of governments in both Western and Eastern Europe of the potential contribution to economic and social reconstruction which libraries and information services can make. This is a matter which might be taken up by the Commission, perhaps in association with NGOs such as IFLA.

2. The common need of the Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Eastern Europe is developing a wider range of contacts, as a basis for potential partnerships with institutions in Western Europe. The Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Western Europe may need more encouragement to participate in these activities, but initially some kind of survey of present involvement and attitudes is desirable. This is a matter which should be addressed by EUCLID, the European Association for Library and Information Education and Research, perhaps in association with the IFLA Section on Education and Training.

3. Pending the establishment of a wider range of partnerships, the IFLA Section on Education and EUCLID should seek funds for a series of workshops on the curricular and teaching issues outlined, to bring together staff from various countries in Eastern and Western Europe to share experiences.

4. There is a widespread need to revive internal professional publishing to provide in each country a regular and up to date medium for transmitting news of national and international developments in a language easily accessible to all. The Commission should clarify whether it could support such a regular news bulletin (not a scholarly journal) as part of JEP projects.

5. The need for the provision of a few model libraries and information centres to be established in each country should be put to the agencies responsible for development assistance. This might initially be through a dissemination seminar sponsored by the TEMPUS office, and organised in association with IFLA and EUCLID.

6. Some consideration should be given to finding a publisher for the 'Books and libraries sector reports' whilst this information is still relatively up to date.

Bulgaria

Education for librarianship and information work in Bulgaria broadly follows the Soviet pattern which was adopted in all the former communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe. At the professional level, there are programmes in the Universities in Sofia and Veliko Tornovo, whilst a paraprofessional course is offered by the Institute of Library Science in Sofia, and library techniques courses are offered in secondary schools in several towns such as Gabrovo.

The Department of Library, Scientific Information and Cultural Policy in the University of Sofia "St Kliment Ohridski" began to offer undergraduate courses in librarianship as a minor subject in the 5 year (10 semester) joint degree programme offered by the Faculty of Philosophy in the early 1950s. From 1993/94 a revised programme is to be offered as a major subject, although students will continue to study a second discipline and will enter library studies after completing the Faculty's common 3 semester foundation programme. At present the 3 full time staff who teach library studies are part of a department of 10 in the area of communication/media studies, but it is hoped that a separate department will emerge in a year or two.

Staff expertise in the University appears to be heavily weighted towards the traditional subjects of librarianship, and a large number of visiting lecturers are therefore utilised, but it is not clear that this can provide the in-depth expertise required to deliver an advanced course. The development of the new programme has been based on an examination of the written curricula of about 20 Schools in Western Europe, and appears to have received some support from the Faculty in resource terms, e.g. books and a small computer laboratory including a CD player. However, the relevance of the new programme to national realities and aspirations has not been thoroughly tested.

The programme in the University of Sofia has always been small (enrolling 10-20 students p.a.) and currently has allegedly only about 3 whilst the restructuring takes place. Former graduates have been mainly employed in academic and special libraries and at the higher levels in public libraries.

The Institute of Library Science was also established in the 1950s, and offers a three year course at post-secondary level. Its graduates are employed in all kinds of libraries, but the qualification awarded by the Institute is not recognised for appointment to some positions, e.g. as chief librarians of county library systems. The former Director of the School (Dr Topalova, who retired about 5 years ago) was a forceful and influential personality, and the School was provided with purpose built premises in the suburbs of Sofia about 10 years ago. The teaching space appears adequate for the student numbers (c250 full-time and c300 part-time), but the building has been badly maintained. There is a large library, but the limited number of reading spaces and the multiple copies of set texts point towards predominantly didactic teaching methods. Although all students are required to study at least 2 foreign languages, there are relatively few current professional texts in the major foreign languages (English, German). The Institute had been provided with a small number of 8 bit microcomputers some years ago, but these were superseded by about 12 PCs provided by the (Soros) Open Society Foundation a couple of years ago. The range of software is very limited, and no attempt appears to have been made to take advantage of the shareware available on Internet bulletin boards which could be accessed from the Academy of Sciences. The Institute ordered a line for online searching from the

telephone company more than 2 years ago.

A number of the Institute's staff are also involved in teaching the new undergraduate programme which was established by the University in Veliko Tornovo in 1992/93, and students of the Institute are admitted into that programme with advanced standing. No such agreement has been possible with the University in Sofia. Many, if not all, of the staff of the Institute believe that students completing their course should be awarded a Bachelors degree. The Ministry of Culture, Education and Science recently conducted a review of the Institute's development, but the Professor of Library Studies in the University of Sofia was appointed as the consultant to carry out the review, and the Institute's staff have no confidence in the objectivity and impartiality of the subsequent decision to reject the proposed award of a Bachelor's degree.

The role of the pupils who complete the course in the secondary schools is not clear, but their appears to be a local debate about whether or not they are well enough educated to work as librarians in village libraries, where the traditional role has focussed on encouraging reading for both literacy and cultural purposes. Some participants in this debate appear to ignore both the economic realities which suggest that the finance for staffing the village libraries will increasingly be limited, and the professional realities which call for an objective evaluation of the role of the village librarians and their training needs.

Overall, perhaps 10,000 people work in libraries in Bulgaria. About 2,000 are believed to have a qualification from the Institute and about 1,000 from the University of Sofia. Many qualified librarians are said to be in jobs which do not require qualifications at the level which they hold. Numbers entering training are said to be increasing, but the proportion taking jobs in libraries is low. A combination of factors appear to be at work: the traditional use of a course in librarianship as a 'soft' route to university entrance or to a degree; a growing awareness of the broader opportunities for those with the librarian's skills with applications of Information Technology; and the low salaries paid to librarians (and other public sector staff). Typically a librarian in a public library earns about 1500 Leva per month (c.£40), and an academic/special librarian about 2,500 Leva (£70) compared with 10,000 Leva (£280) for a bilingual secretary in a private enterprise.

It is said that a new structure of professional education and training is emerging, allegedly based on Western European models:

1. Library Technical Assistant - trained in vocational secondary schools followed by certificated in service practical training
2. Librarian with a Bachelor's degree from the Universities
3. Chief Librarian, rendered eligible by having completed a 1 year post-experience Masters degree
4. Librarian/Researcher with a PhD

Again, it appears that this is based on a flawed understanding of the situation, based largely on reading the literature. There appears to be a growing appreciation of the role and potential of both in-service training and continuing education, but equally serious misunderstandings of the structure and content of Western European educational programmes in this respect. The same might be said for claims that the University of Sofia course is moving into the publishing field. This appears to be more related to the departments emphasis on media studies than on any understanding of the nature of publishing in a market economy.

There is no doubt that the publishing industry and book trade are going through major changes. Much low quality material is appearing aimed at a mass market and fast return (which is very necessary because of the high interest rates paid on bank loans). Imported material is not readily available because of its cost, and most libraries are largely dependent on donations from aid agencies and grants from foundations.

The Sofia University library has no fixed budget, but draws on the general University budget as necessary. It is hoped to compile a computerised version of catalogues of all the university library holdings, but this is not yet near being a reality. The National Library has a library automation system, but there is a widely held view that (through inexperience or worse), a bad choice of system was made.

The general lack of experience of advanced library and information work is frequently compounded by the lack of any personal sense of responsibility or commitment. The idea of a service oriented library is almost unknown. There is much need for user education programmes to be developed, but this activity is much undervalued by professionals who see themselves largely as administrators. Although new teaching staff in the University of Sofia are required to take courses in teaching methods during the early year of their employment, little subsequent attention is given to whether these skills are applied, and there must be doubts about whether current teaching methods will develop the necessary skills and attitudes required in the future generation of librarians.

External contacts and formal academic links are, as might be expected, entirely with other former communist countries, although in the University of Sofia there are some western links in other disciplines (some of them long established). However, a couple of World Bank programmes for academic development have a library component, and will inevitably bring some new contacts. There may be a language barrier obstructing the development of such links, particularly for those librarians educated at the University of Sofia, where learning a modern (Western) European language becomes compulsory only in the new curriculum. The major problem is that travel grants are in short supply, and few western librarians have visited the country.

Although there appears to be a general wish to make qualitative improvements in both library service and education for librarianship and information work, the isolation and inexperience of senior members of the profession is a major handicap. This is aggravated by the tensions inherent in any changing situation, and the seeming inability of the old guard and the new to collaborate to achieve professional goals. The Union of Librarians and Information Officers (ULIO), which appears to represent the new leadership of the profession, is significantly influenced by the staff and former graduates of the University of Sofia. During my visit, the formation of a separate Bulgarian Association of Library and Information Sciences was announced, with 3 of its 4 founding members connected with the Institute and/or the University of Veliko Tornovo (the fourth founder is a retired senior librarian). However, the absence of clear and consistent government policy for libraries and for education means that development plans lack a proper framework is perhaps the most serious problem.

The Czech and Slovak Republics

Education for librarianship and information work at the professional level in the Czech and Slovak Republics is provided mainly in the Departments of Librarianship and Information Science in Charles University in Prague and in Comenius University in Bratislava. In addition the Department of Information and Knowledge Engineering in the Prague University of Economics teaches courses in Business Information and in Information Analysis. With curricular support from Charles University the Department of Literature Science, Museology and Creative Photography in the Faculty of Arts at the Silesian University in Opava has recently established a two year programme for public librarians within the framework of its four year degree programme. At the sub-professional level, there are three Vocational Secondary Schools teaching at technician level (in Prague, Brno, and Bratislava).

The education system is under revision. Under the influence of the Dutch model, the Vocational Secondary Schools are being encouraged to develop their courses by adding an optional 2 year extension leading to a Bachelors degree. The universities at present offer the Diplom, but are revising their curricula so that the first part is comparable to the Bachelor's degree programme, and students then continue for a further two years for a Master's degree. It was apparently agreed at government level that about a dozen Vocational Schools would be assisted in making these changes by partnerships with Dutch Hogeschools. On the basis of advice from "the profession" (presumably the State Library Council, as the Library Associations are weak and lack influence), the government has agreed to a link between the Hogeschool in Tilburg and the Vocational Secondary School for Librarians in Prague. The other two Schools and the Universities are being left to devise their own salvation. The professional support for this development appears to have been prompted by a perennial concern about the shortage of professional librarians (which largely stems from housing problems and immobility, from state controls on the numbers of students, and from poor salaries). Little thought appears to have been given to the likely impact on libraries (and jobs for librarians) of reductions in public expenditure, to the probable impact of these changes on the availability of sufficient staff with technician level qualifications, or to finer points such as the appropriate manpower structure required in libraries and information centres. A lack of contextual appreciation by the aid donors and by the recipients seems likely to produce chaos out of what is at present an orderly situation, albeit one which does not produce sufficient numbers of trained staff.

The government's current financial situation seems to be having mixed implications for Departments. Inflation is increasing faster than budgets. Staff salaries are very poor. If the 1992 pay review for academic staff is implemented in full, and salaries are thus nearly doubled, a lecturer at the scale maximum will earn only about #160 per month. Many staff have taken second jobs, and others have left altogether. The Departments of Librarianship and Information Science do, however, appear to be able to recruit some highly experienced, enthusiastic and capable replacements, partly perhaps because of the widespread fear of redundancies in libraries and information centres and partly because some able people are no longer politically unacceptable. Acquisition of Information Technology has also become a little easier as institutions have been persuaded to allocate resources to Schools of Librarianship. The School in Charles University is fortunate in being almost the only Department within the Faculty of Philosophy to make any demands on the equipment budget. In Comenius University, a

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laboratory was equipped with 30 PC compatible microcomputers because the Department of Librarianship persuaded the Faculty of Philosophy that the Department should teach basic computer skills to all the Faculty's 3,500 undergraduates. The Department's resources are insufficient to sustain this task, but a request for more staff and PC's will be included in a report on what is expected to be a successful first year!

On the other hand, library facilities to support general teaching remain poor, and may be getting worse. Many of the older librarians are merely apathetic custodians of irrelevant collections. There appear to be few service oriented libraries to provide role models for students. An insignificant supply of foreign material, and a diminishing supply of indigenous publications as subsidies for publishing dry up, enforce professional isolation. To a limited extent the Departmental libraries are supplemented by the national libraries' collections in Prague and Bratislava, but these are little better.

At the same time the Departments are seeking to make changes in their courses. The Prague University of Economics is placing greater emphasis on information for business, and is experimenting with on-line searching and e-mail. This is extremely frustrating because the whole of the internal Czechoslovakian network GOLEM is linked to the European Academic Research Network by a single low speed line between Prague and Linz in Austria. A second free connection between Vienna and Bratislava has recently been offered by the Austrian authorities. Charles University has established a new post-graduate part-time course for public librarians, initially intended to assist them in the transition of the role of public libraries from cultural reading centres to local information centres. New staff have brought new skills and interests, but there is still a need for external inputs. Some of these needs are being met by drawing on the expertise of academic staff from other institutions, particularly between the two universities in Prague. Staff have, however, few opportunities to visit Western Europe or North America to examine current practice, and relatively few foreign visitors are received to bring experience and stimulation.

Key areas in which developments are taking place are teaching management and teaching business information. External support for business information has tended to focus on computerised management information and control systems, rather than an strategic information about markets, competitors and suppliers, and finance and credit.

The bright spots in Czechoslovakia are the research activities. The creative effort which is applied to solving problems, and the quality of the achievements is undoubted. The downside is, however, that much of the research is re-inventing the wheel, and the introduction of external advice or funding to purchase systems could release those talents and energies to facilitate real progress.

Hungary

Education for the professional level of library and information work in Hungary is conducted in the Universities of Budapest and Debrecen, and in Colleges of Education (training teachers for secondary schools) in Budapest, Nyreghyaza, Szeged and Szombathely. In addition, there are sub-professional courses in a number of colleges training primary teachers, and an optional course offered to secondary school pupils in the gimnasia. The pattern of education has been significantly influenced by the constraints on personal mobility imposed by the housing situation (which seems unlikely to change in the near future), but an effective central planning system has produced a well co-ordinated system, in which the professional standing of the various types of courses and the suitability of their students for different types of employment is widely understood. Moves are afoot in link institutions into larger units, and for the Colleges to move to University status, but curiously the transition will be on a department by department basis, if existing university departments approve the college department's syllabi.

The Department of Library and Information Science at Szombathely College of Education is the largest of the Departments in the country, and has the strongest international connections. Three of its 10 full-time teaching staff have benefited from the Fulbright scholarship scheme which every year offers one Hungarian librarian the opportunity to study at the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University in the USA. The Department is awaiting the results of a TEMPUS Joint European Project (JEP) proposal for a link with the Danmarks Biblioteksskole, Copenhagen in Denmark, Fachhochschule fur Bibliothekswesen, Stuttgart in Germany, The Robert Gordon University, and with Hogskolan i Boras in Sweden. The University of Budapest has already received support through a JEP established with Hanover, Germany and Deventer, Netherlands. The University of Budapest is typical of the other professional level Schools in having only about 4 full-time teachers of librarianship. The School at Debrecen was established in 1988/89, but will have permanent staff only from 1992/93. Currently it attracts only 4 to 6 students each year.

The education system has major financial problems. All budgets have increased by only 5 per cent at a time when inflation is about 25 per cent pa. However, institutional managers' experience or sense of responsibility does not appear to be sufficiently developed to permit an adequate response to this situation and in May 1992, attempts were made to freeze budgets for an indefinite period on Ministry instructions. Nonetheless, a year later most institutions were believed to have budget deficits of 50M to 100M Forint (£0.5M to £1M). There appears to be some flexibility in the financial management system, and more is expected when new higher education legislation is finally agreed. However the legislation has been the controversial subject of much consultation with the various interested institutions, and at the time of the visit the draft circulating was the seventh to have been produced in 15 months. It is expected that from about 1994, colleges will no longer be funded on the basis of historic costs, but will be granted money on a per capita basis for each student. Perhaps as a consequence, student numbers on full-time and part-time courses seem likely to increase. The implications of that change clearly have not yet been thought through. The National Advisory Committee on education for librarianship has not met for a couple of years, but is being revived to fit in with the new Higher Education Structure, with the intention of reviewing both the content and standards of professional and sub-professional education.

Central direction of the curriculum was abandoned in 1984, and for a while some of the Departments, notably Szombathely, managed to keep abreast of, and even slightly ahead of professional practice in the country. However, the situation has now changed and the education system is beginning to lag behind practice. This is most noticeable in the area of information technology. Until recently, none of the Departments had modern computer facilities, but the University of Budapest now has an IT laboratory equipped with TEMPUS support. At Debrecen the teaching of information science is undertaken within the framework of the Department of Applied Sciences, and makes use of that Department's computer laboratory. At Szombathely, the Department's own computer facilities consist of two PC's (one with a CD-ROM drive), and one Commodore 64 acquired some years ago. It makes use of the College's one communal computer laboratory of 20 PC-compatible machines, and 24 PC's provided for language teaching. The facilities are intended for all the College's 2,500 students, and the Department's use of them is naturally limited. In addition the College library has 2 PC compatibles which are used for a number of databases developed by utilising the freely available Unesco CDS-ISIS package, and for electronic mail on a network centred in Budapest with international connections. No international on-line searching is done at the College, and students from the Department of Librarianship and Information Science are taken to the University at Vezprem to see these. The budget for searching by the entire class is only U.S $20 per annum.

Lack of ready access to foreign publications is a contributing factor. Indigenous publication is also in decline as libraries find it increasingly difficult to maintain their sponsorship of publications. Such literature as is published within the country is rarely analytical, evaluative or critical.

Staff are dependent on external support for participation in international events, and international contacts have largely depended on initiatives by external partners. Some funds are available for participating in events within Hungary (about £300 pa in Szombathely), but internal communications are poor and Departments do not always receive notification of scheduled events. Staff teaching loads tend to be high outwith the University sector, but the proposed new legislation holds out the promise of regular sabbaticals. At the moment, however, it is almost impossible to pay for visiting lecturers, and the salary of staff abroad on scholarships is not always made available to appoint a replacement.

The lack of access to information technology has hindered the development of progressive courses in librarianship and information science, but the changes which are taking place in the country are creating new demands. Attempts are being made to develop courses in business information and in management, but there is little experience on which to base these either in the Schools or in practice.

New curricular proposals are arising from existing or planned TEMPUS partnerships. The Department at Szombathely is currently preparing a new management course, but this appears likely to be fairly theoretical, and in any case will last only 1 semester and will inevitably be a fairly light treatment. There is no real understanding of the concepts of cost-effectiveness and performance measurement or of the "Enterprise" skills which are a feature of British higher education. Consideration is, however, being given to extending the coverage of management to 3 semesters, incorporating marketing and public relations and the management of organisational change.

Attempts are also being made to develop courses in business information, but again there is little experience and few material resources available in the

country. One lecturer from Szombathely will spend 1993/94 in Aberystwyth and Leicester sponsored by the British Council to develop this area. The initial intention is to offer an intensive 120 hour course at weekends, probably in collaboration with a local college of finance and accounting. The course will have four elements: information sources, information technology, finance and accounting, and English language.

A number of current initiatives may stimulate development and provide an infusion of resources. These include not only TEMPUS activities, but also government sponsored projects of a general nature intended to develop Business Information Services and to improve College level education, and more specific projects such as proposals for a World Bank funded scheme to improve academic libraries, with a very substantial element of the loan earmarked for the retraining of academic librarians.

Local initiatives at Szombathely include a new 4 year part-time course commencing in 1993/94 for people already working in libraries, and a new optional subsidiary course introducing students of English language to the world of information, to information skills, and to the relevant terminology and usage. This will also commence in 1993/94. Another possibility is a new course for public librarians to be developed jointly with a local college of Social Work. Also under consideration is a post-qualification Masters degree in Librarianship.

Poland

Education for librarianship and information work at the professional level in Poland is currently provided by 9 universities (Katowice, Krakow, Lodz, Lublin, Poznan, Torun, Sosnowiec, Warsaw and Wroclaw) and 7 other institutions of higher education (Bydgoszcz, Kielce, Krakow, Olsztyn, Sczecin, Wroclaw and Zielona Gora). In addition there are a number of other institutions offering courses leading to technician level qualifications, and a significant amount of in-service training and short course provision.

The number of staff and students vary. The largest department of librarianship and information studies is in the University of Warsaw with over 30 full-time academic staff, but there are also substantial departments in Krakow, Poznan and Wroclaw.

The education system has major financial problems. Funding to employ part-time staff and visiting lecturers and to support student placements away from their home area ceased, and funding for teaching materials and staff travel is negligible. The acquisition budgets of institutional libraries have been severely depleted. Academic staff salaries have failed to keep pace with inflation and bear little relation to salaries in the private sector. For example the starting salary for a new lecturer (1 million zlotys per month; about £500 per annum) is only half that of a junior, unskilled production operative in a privately owned factory. (Depending on which local prices are taken for comparison, purchasing power of these salaries is between one quarter and one twentieth of the purchasing power of someone in a comparable position in Western Europe). In the fifth month of its financial year, the government had still not agreed the budget for 1992. There are fears, probably well grounded, that financial constraints could lead to enforced staff reductions in 1993. It is already difficult to recruit and retain staff, particularly those who could teach information science because Information Technology skills and a knowledge of English command a premium in the private sector.

Central planning and guidance on curricular matters has been discontinued. New models are said to be emerging, but at the moment the pattern is generally a core course for the first 5 semesters of the five year course leading to a Masters degree, followed by specialisation in either:

- school and pedagogical libraries
- rare books/historical bibliography
- information science

There is an awareness amongst the younger generation that these areas are not mutually exclusive, but the older generation which is said to dominate teaching in some of the provincial university departments appears to be still firmly oriented to the traditional book-collection approach. Although the main pressure for reform is in the tangible area of Information Technology, there is some appreciation that across the whole spectrum, professional thinking and professional practice in Poland is, in many ways, some 40 to 50 years behind development in the West. Much of the curriculum is professionally irrelevant, but is taught to fill the 5 year programme in the absence of sufficient alternative professional material. There are, however, some signs that some university departments are examining ways of broadening their curricular base as a defence against external pressures. Departments also face the challenge of balancing not only professional theory and practice, but also the potentially conflicting requirements of academic and

vocational relevance.

Shortages of computer equipment and software inhibit progress in information science teaching, but through personal contacts with Ministry officials, the Department in the University of Warsaw has acquired about a dozen PC compatible microcomputers which are linked in an ethernet LAN. A satisfactory range of legitimately acquired software is available, and the University's computer system is connected to the European Academic Research Network, but at present the Department has no CD-ROM facilities nor access to any international on-line service. Overall provision compares poorly with most West European Schools (RGU has 60 PCs for 150 students and 14 staff, compared with Warsaw's 12 for nearly 500 students and staff), but this probably also reflects the general level of provision of computer facilities in Polish libraries and information centres.

Nonetheless, the Department in Warsaw (and probably the rest) acknowledge that it is probably failing to keep their students in touch with the leading edge of professional practice in their own country. Some libraries in Poland have installed CD-ROM databases, and it is believed that some may be undertaking on-line searching. However, it is difficult to make these assertions with any certainty as the striking feature of the present situation is the isolation of Departments not only from current professional practice and educational trends internationally, but also from professional practice and other Departments teaching librarianship and information science in Poland. The reduction in travel budgets and libraries' acquisition budgets are only two of several factors contributing to this problem.

Opportunities for foreign travel have been limited. For the last ten years the University of Warsaw has, however, enjoyed an annual Fulbright scholarship to send a member of staff to Kent State University, USA, for a year. There have also been occasional, but less substantial staff exchanges between the Jagellonian University, Krakow and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

A number of organisations have ceased to sponsor the publication of professional journals. Published in Polish and containing news of developments in Poland and abroad, they made a significant contribution to current awareness. The low status accorded to information science by the Academy of Sciences may mean the termination of the last Polish language information science journal.

Another factor contributing to the academics' isolation has been a reduction in research activity. Research activity represents a significant proportion of the contract hours of academic staff, but their low salaries have compelled most of them to take second jobs often unrelated to their academic work and the decline in research output is ignored by their senior colleagues (who are probably in the same position; a professor earns only about £1,000 per annum at the current rate of exchange).

Most research activity in Poland is now undertaken by the 36 staff of the research institute in the National Library. These staff are mainly engaged on projects funded until the end of 1992. After that, their employment prospects are at present uncertain. Their current research activities into e.g. reading patterns and library staff's attitudes to professional education are interesting and sound, but rather unworldly. There is, for example, no attempt being made to examine the impact of recent changes in book publishing or of the closure of 10 per cent of the public library branches and 40 per cent of the village reading centres in the last two years, or any possibility of interplay between these two factors of contemporary life. The concepts of

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assessing the significance of cause and effect, and the possibility of using research results to influence public policy decisions or curriculum development appear to be, at present, outwith their grasp. There is, therefore, little sense of urgency in the conduct of the research or in the publication of the results. The customary planning cycle for arranging funding inhibits any immediate response to emerging problems.

This is perhaps a reflection of the fundamental weakness in professional practice and professional education in Poland. More than 40 years of central planning and direction have resulted in a generation of professionals with no familiarity with modern management teaching and the managerial techniques which are essential in a liberalised situation.

These managerial skills will certainly be needed by any information workers employed by the new private enterprises. Because of the reduction in research effort, and perhaps because attempts to collect data might appear to be an echo of Stalinist central planning, no hard data exists, but these new jobs are believed to be one factor in the buoyant demand for graduates from the Department of Librarianship in the University of Warsaw. Other factors are the need to replace librarians who have moved to better paid occupations and the demand for the graduates' transferable skills in Information Technology applications. In other cities where there may not be the variety of opportunities for librarians, and students may not be so well equipped for other information roles, the employment prospects for graduates and the demand for places in the Departments may not be so strong.

There is an enormous contrast between the 5 year duration of the Departments' programme and the present situation of total discontinuity in Polish society. Change in the Departments cannot easily be achieved overnight, but there appears to be a threat that changes might be enforced with an immediacy which could result in fragmented decisions. At present, the existence of a separate Department in a University depends of the presence of a minimum of 8 staff possessing Doctoral degrees. Any reduction in the staffing of some of the smaller Departments could terminate their existence as separate entities and threaten the future of the discipline in that region. Given the immobility in Polish society, a result of the housing shortage, this could leave libraries in some areas in difficulties in recruiting new graduates.

Romania

Education for librarianship and information work at the professional level in Romania is provided by the National University of Bucharest. In common with those in most of the other countries of Eastern and Central Europe, the School was reorganised by the communist government shortly after coming to power. In this case, the School appears to have been closed in 1951, re-opened in 1953 to offer an undergraduate programme of 4 years duration, but closed again in 1958. Some of the School's students were able to continue to work towards the PhD level, but the last doctoral degree appears to have been awarded in the mid 1960's. The School was re-opened in 1990/91, again offering a four year undergraduate programme.

After the University School was closed, a college-based programme of three years duration continued to be offered, apparently mainly intended to produce librarians for the public and school libraries. However in 1974 the government's alleged prejudiced attitude towards the educational requirements of library work, coupled with pressure for financial economies, resulted in the reorganisation of public libraries and the closure of the college course. Technician level courses in some tertiary colleges and a course in library techniques in some secondary schools appear to have continued throughout this period.

Also during this period, each of the library networks continued to provide training for staff in the network. For example, the National Pedagogical Institute provided training courses for library staff at all levels of the education system, from school to university libraries. For the public library network, the Ministry of Culture organises a substantial programme of courses at its training centre some 150km from Bucharest. This begins with a compulsory 2 week course for all new staff. Staff may continue to attend other courses over a two to three year period culminating in an examination and a certificate. Progression through the programme is linked to salary levels.

The University course is taught mainly by 4 staff from the National University Library. In addition to their full-time jobs in the Library, they also carry a full teaching load. In effect they have two full time jobs, a situation which is not unusual in a country where incomes are so low (an average librarian's salary is c £25/$40 per month, and the Deputy University librarian earns c £50/$80), but it is an unenviable workload for the 26 weeks each year when teaching takes place. The curriculum which was initially approved by the Ministry of Education was rather traditional in its approach, but has been revised after the teachers had the opportunity to examine courses in countries with advanced information systems, and with a particularly helpful input from the University of Amsterdam under a Dutch bilateral technical co-operation programme. One of the other benefits from the Dutch assistance has been the provision of a small computer laboratory for teaching, consisting of a dozen networked PCs with MS-DOS and some word processing packages. This is only available to students when the member of staff concerned is teaching or otherwise on duty (c 14 hours per week).

The revised curriculum will be implemented from 1993/94 when 4 additional teachers will be appointed. There are now 112 students, and the intake is stabilising at 40 p.a. The Faculty of Letters hosts the course, but it may become an independent Faculty next year.

There now appears to be very little state coordination of libraries and information services or of professional education. Attempts to introduce a national library council have been rebuffed. At the senior level of the civil service, other than in the Ministry of Culture, there appear to be few specialists with overall responsibility for library and information work throughout the country. It appears that overall responsibility for managing the library networks may have been abandoned, even in crucial Ministries such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Economy.

Government policy in the area of libraries and information services appears unclear, and this is frustrating developments. There are proposals to develop Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in up to three or four other universities (Cluj-Napoca, Iasi, Sebiu), because of the need to provide professional education in a geographically large country which employs c.20,000 people in libraries, but which also has a relatively immobile population. The School in Cluj may start next year, but the others are less certain. No thought appears to have been given to developing distance education programmes.

Similar lack of direction is inhibiting the development of the public library systems. There are some 3000 public libraries in Romania - 41 county libraries, about 200 town libraries, and numerous village libraries. These are all subject to a degree of control by the Ministry of Culture, and receive some of their funding directly from the Ministry. Public libraries are now possibly the only public service in Romania which is 100% state subsidised, including the local government contributions. Many of the larger libraries, especially the county libraries, already have a wide information role, and are not simply cultural reading centres. The libraries formerly operated by the Trade Unions as workplace libraries for their members are in decline for lack of organisational support. The role of village libraries is being redeveloped, following a period between 1974 and 1990 when the existence of school libraries in the same village was used as an excuse to reduce their role. However, they now face a new challenge from some village "mayors" who would prefer to use the library space for a more commercial activity. A strategy for public libraries is being developed, but resources are a problem.

In the special library field, development seems to be mixed. The banks have always had substantial libraries. They have recently been privatised, and the ensuing commercial emphasis might have been expected to stimulate development, but they do not seem to be developing more advanced information services. In the healthcare field, a number of medical libraries were presented with CD ROM equipment and Index Medicus on disk last year, as part of an American assistance programme. Some appear to have found the hard currency necessary to renew the subscriptions. A major handicap to development is, however, the poor telecommunications system. Internally this prevents shared use of the c.100 databases which have allegedly been developed in different institutions, but which are only available in-house. Externally, there are only 2 connections to the European Academic Research Network, via low speed lines to Linz (Austria) and Darmstadt (Germany) which are paid for by the governments of those countries. These do at least facilitate some use of database hosts such as DIALOG, and students can see it in use at the Central Institute for Informatics. Development of CD-ROM based services is easier because, although many information centres have hitherto depended on gifted equipment, it is now possible to buy it in Romania in local currency.

Clearly, there are major problems in exposing students and teachers to modern information systems so that they can gain confidence in using and developing them. A shortage of knowledgeable teachers capable of teaching at the

University level may also prove a problem. The government is just beginning to tighten up its approach to the quality of university teaching, as a response to the low standards in some of the 80 private universities which have emerged in the last 4 years. One consequence is that university teachers will be required to be properly qualified.

Given the absence of training at an appropriate level within the country for more than 30 years, the very few proper scholarships for study abroad granted in the last few years is a serious handicap. Quite a number of librarians have made short term visits to other countries, which may be useful in raising awareness of current practice, but perhaps as few as 3 have been granted scholarships for gaining a postgraduate qualification. The consequent lack of expertise is felt not only in obvious areas such as the teaching of information technology, but also in the teaching of management, where a new emphasis needs to be given because of the shift from a centrally directed system to one in which much responsibility for planning and decision making is delegated.

Discussion topics

In preparation for the visits, a list of topics was prepared and sent to the host institutions to enable them to give advance consideration to the issues to be discussed. The following topics were proposed:

The country:

- General trends in education and finance for education in each country
- General trends in the development of Librarianship and Information work and associated professional studies in each country
- Other professional and paraprofessional courses in Librarianship and Information Studies in each country, and relationships between them
- The place of Librarianship and Information work and associated professional studies in national or institutional development plans

The School:

- Number of staff
- Number of students
- Courses offered, and current research projects
- Physical resources (premises, library facilities, teaching equipment)
- Current curriculum - structure, content, teaching methods, assessment methods, particularly in relation to the following subjects:
  - management
  - information technology
  - user needs analysis
  - marketing
  - evaluation of informatiation systems
- Strengths and weaknesses of the School of Librarianship and Information Studies in terms of:
- curriculum (at present and in the light of any proposed changes)
- teaching methods
- research activities
- teaching materials and equipment (books, journals, information technology)
- Strengths and weaknesses of the staff of the School of Librarianship and Information Studies in relation to:
  - recruitment of new teachers
  - existing expertise
  - workload
  - language skills
- Existing arrangements for staff development
- Contacts with Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies in Western Europe and formal links
- Assistance which has been or is currently being received from Schools of Librarianship and Information Studies, or for which there is a current application
  - nature of the assistance
  - evaluation of completed projects
- Links with other disciplines in the institution or elsewhere to extend the range of activities
- Channels of communication between the School and the profession, and between the School and decision makers in the

Institution and in government
- Financial support which might be available for special developmental activities, both in the country and abroad